

# A Guide to North Carolina Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws

**PART - 3**



**Guidebook on  
General Statutes,  
Ordinances,  
and Resources**



North Carolina Department  
of Transportation  
Division of Bicycle &  
Pedestrian Transportation

# A Guide to North Carolina Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws

*Laws are subject to change by the  
North Carolina General Assembly.  
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North Carolina Department  
of Transportation  
Division of Bicycle &  
Pedestrian Transportation

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# Motorists' Responsibilities

## Motorists and Bicyclists

### Bicycles as Vehicles

Under North Carolina law, bicycles are considered vehicles and should be treated just like other vehicles.

[§20-4.01 (49)], [§20-171.1], and

[§20-171.8] Note that all the

statutes mentioned in this

section that refer to “vehicles”

should be interpreted to refer to

both motor vehicles and bicycles,

unless by its nature the law cannot apply

to bicycles. Unfortunately, not all bicyclists

behave like vehicle operators, so motorists

should make every effort to avoid a collision since

the bicyclist is more likely to be injured or killed in a

crash. In particular, motorists should watch out for

children on bicycles because they sometimes behave

unpredictably. [§20-154(a)]

### Passing a Bicycle

A motorist overtaking a bicycle must pass at least two

(2) feet to the left of the bicyclist and must not move

back to the right side of the highway until safely past

the overtaken bicycle. [§20-149(a)]

A motorist may not drive left of the center of the highway to pass a vehicle, including a bicycle, in these circumstances:

- Unless the left side is clearly visible and free of oncoming traffic for a sufficient distance ahead that the motorist can pass the bicyclist safely. [§20-150(a)]
- On the crest of a hill or at a curve in the road where the driver cannot see at least 500 feet ahead. [§20-150(b)]
- At any railroad grade crossing or intersection, unless directed to do so by a traffic control officer. [§20-150(c)]
- Where the Department of Transportation has placed signs or markers indicating that passing should not be attempted. [§20-150(d)] and [(e)]

## **Following Too Closely**

A motorist should not follow a bicycle more closely than is reasonable and prudent, considering vehicle speed, amount of traffic, and the road conditions. [§20-152(a)]

## **Yielding to Bicyclists at Driveways or Alleys**

The driver of a vehicle emerging from or entering an alley, building entrance, private road, or driveway shall yield the right-of-way to any bicyclist approaching on a sidewalk or walkway extending across an alley, building entrance, road, or driveway. [§20-173(c)]

## **Motorists and Pedestrians**

### **Yielding to Pedestrians in Crosswalks, Driveways**

Where traffic control signals are not in place or in working order, a vehicle operator must yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing within a marked crosswalk or within any unmarked crosswalk at or near an intersection. [§20-173(a)] If a pedestrian crosses at any place other than a marked or unmarked crosswalk, he must yield to all vehicles. [§20-174(a)]

The driver of a vehicle emerging from or entering an alley, building entrance, private road, or driveway must yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian, or person riding a bicycle, approaching on any sidewalk or walkway. [§20-173(c)]

### **Yielding at Right Turn on Red**

At intersections, motorists must come to a complete stop and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other traffic-including bicycles-when making a right turn on red. [§20-158(b)(2)]

### **Audible Warning**

Before starting, stopping or turning, motorists on a highway or public vehicular area must ensure that such movement is safe and must give a clearly audible signal by sounding the horn to warn any pedestrians that would be affected. [§20-154(a)]

## **Watching Out for Pedestrians**

Even though pedestrians have a responsibility to obey the law and watch out for vehicles, motorists must exercise caution to avoid colliding with pedestrians on the roadway and must sound a horn to warn pedestrians, when necessary. Motorists must also exercise caution when observing any child or apparently incapacitated person in the roadway. [§20-174(e)]

## **Keeping Pedestrian Facilities Clear**

Motorists also have a responsibility to keep pedestrian facilities clear. Vehicles cannot enter an intersection or a marked crosswalk unless there is sufficient space on the other side so the vehicle does not obstruct the passage of pedestrians and other vehicles. [§20-142.5]

## **Motorists' Responsibilities in General**

### **Signaling Movements**

Before starting, stopping, or turning, a motorist must be certain that any movement can be made in safety and must give a plainly visible signal of the intended movement to other drivers and pedestrians. A motorist should not back up a vehicle unless such movement can be done safely and without interfering with other traffic. [§20-154(a)]

Signals for turning and stopping can be indicated with the vehicle's electrical signals or with the hand and arm. The signal should be given continuously for the last 100 feet of travel before the stop or turn. However, in areas with a speed limit of 45 miles an hour or greater, the signal must be given during the last 200 feet before the stop or turn. [§20-153(b)]

*Motorists should be particularly careful to look out for bicycles and pedestrians when turning because they can be hidden in the driver's blind spot.*